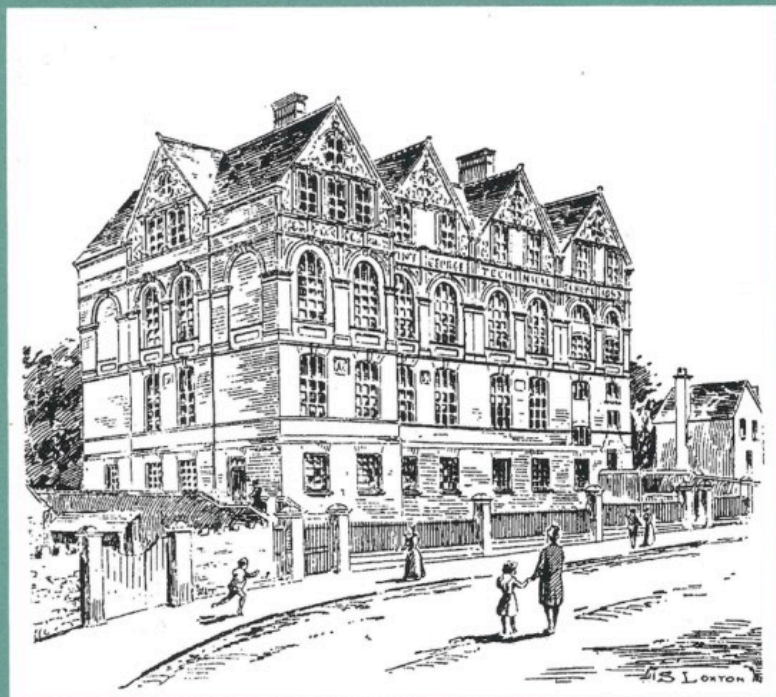


THE BRISTOL SCHOOL BOARD 1871-1903



CYRIL GIBSON

THE BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
LOCAL HISTORY PAMPHLETS

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The Bristol School Board 1871-1903 is the ninety-third pamphlet in the series of Bristol Local History pamphlets published by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association.

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Finding suitable photographic illustrations for this publication proved very difficult and so the author had to rely on drawings by S.J. Loxton which appeared in *Bristol: as it is and as it was* by G.F. Stone (1900).

The publication of a pamphlet by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association does not necessarily imply the Branch's approval of the opinions expressed in it.

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ISBN 0 901388 77 7
ISSN 1362 7759

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Cover Illustration: St. George's Higher Grade School. Opened by the St. George School Board in 1900 for 510 pupils. Taken over by the Bristol School Board following the Boundaries Act of 1897. The multi-storey design differed from Bristol schools, most of which only had a single storey.

THE BRISTOL SCHOOL BOARD 1871-1903

'What is the purpose of this bill? Briefly this, to bring elementary education within the reach of every English home and within the reach of those children who have no home. Our aim is to cover the country with good schools and to get parents to send their children to school ... to complete the present voluntary system, to fill the gaps, sparing public money where it can be done without and with the utmost endeavour not to injure existing and efficient schools ... Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity ... If we leave our workfolk any longer unskilled they will become overmatched in the competition of the world.' - W.E. Forster, Quaker son-in-law of Dr. Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby School, introducing the Education Bill in 1870.

The inauguration of the Bristol School Board in 1871 caused controversy arising from the divisions in Bristol where the political divide was also, in the main, the religious divide and from educational developments locally over the preceding 70 years. In the first decade of the nineteenth Century both the main religious groups started fee-paying day schools, using monitors (older pupils) to teach the younger children, although there was some opposition from churchmen who were concerned that education would encourage the lower orders to want to rise above their station in life.¹ By 1841 fees paid by parents for schooling in Bristol - £34,090 p.a. - exceeded the amount contributed by the Government towards the cost of the education of 5-6 million children in the United Kingdom following the introduction of grants in 1833.² From 1839-1861, when a system of payment by results was introduced, 36 Bristol schools received a total of nearly £24,000 in annual grants, over £7,000 building grants and £3,298 for pupil-teachers. Schools in the suburbs, then outside the city boundary, also received grants. In many schools the accommodation was only one hall; at St. Luke's (Bedminster) the accommodation for 600 pupils was a main hall 94' x 36' with two side classrooms.³ By 1870 about 18,000 children were

registered at the church schools, with another 1,500 children from working class families at private venture schools, mainly Dames' schools, which nominally taught reading, needle-work and moral and religious duties but often were little more than child-care establishments.

Despite claims by the *Bristol Mercury* in 1867 that 'the public mind is ripening for adoption of educational plans of a far more comprehensive character than have yet been sanctioned by the legislature'⁴ little interest appears to have been shewn by the public generally. In the Parliamentary elections of 1868 only four of the nine candidates mentioned education, three expressing opposition to it being made compulsory⁵, although at the Social Science Congress held in Bristol the following year the Rev. Caldicott - Headmaster of Bristol Grammar School - said that as the voluntary bodies had failed to reach all the child population the time to talk about voluntary effort had gone and the State should insist on children being taught.⁶

The Forster Act of 1870 introduced a dual system of education which allowed the existing voluntary fee-paying schools to continue alongside Board schools which could also charge fees but had the advantage of being able to precept on the City Council for support from the rates. Although the Act was a compromise, a major concession had been achieved when independently elected school boards were made responsible for elementary education. In the original proposals boroughs had been given the responsibility in towns, but Forster's supporters in the National Education League were concerned that outside the boroughs education would be controlled by Anglicans.

For a few months local newspapers and politicians shewed little interest; the future of Bristol's endowed schools attracted greater attention and the newspaper headlines were concentrated on the Franco-Prussian War. In the municipal elections Mark Whitwill, a Liberal candidate, alone declared an interest when he expressed the hope that a school board would be formed as early as possible for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of the Elementary Education Act.

The standard of education in many of the voluntary schools was low. The inspector for the Committee of the Council on Education reported that in Bristol 'the great majority of Church of England Schools receiving grants occupied a position of mediocrity, more or less respectable, a few were decidedly and persistently ill-managed and in indifferent condition, whilst a select few deserved to be classed with the best schools in the kingdom'.⁷ In 1872 the inspector commented 'one of the pleasantest phases of inspection was to visit a well-regulated infant school and the general arrangements at Temple Colston and St. Mary Redcliffe Infant Schools left nothing to be desired'.⁸ In the same report

he commended the British (Nonconformist) School in Redcross Street for the excellent results obtained from home lessons.

Religious teaching was a major controversial issue but an amendment to the original bill - the Cowper-Temple Clause - permitted either secularism or scriptural teaching in Board schools, provided it was non-denominational. The *Bristol Mercury* declared its opposition to the religious compromise by stating 'the scheme is unsatisfactory and can only be accepted as a temporary expedient for imperfectly supplying the most urgent want of the nation ... No compromise on the religious difficulty can ever be satisfactory'.⁹

By November 1870 Anglican supporters had recognised the implications of the Act which was denounced by the Bishop of Bath and Wells on the grounds that compulsion was an interference with the liberty of the subject. In Bristol Anglican supporters convened a meeting of the City Council addressed by the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol who accepted that the Act was not subversive and believed that there would probably be a board in Bristol but was concerned about the educational deficiencies of the diocese in respect of school buildings and the need for funds so that church schools could meet the standards prescribed by the Act and continue to provide denominational religious education.

Other speakers attacked secular education and insisted that religious education, to be of any use, must be dogmatic and Anglican. One speaker feared that secular education would 'train a generation for infidelity and immorality and would overthrow all the greatness and glory of England which had come down from the day when the Bible was freely circulated among the people'. An influential Nonconformist - Christopher Thomas - who supported the Act hoped 'the minds of those who composed the school board would be directed earnestly to the bringing under instruction and the practice of virtue the children of the vicious and dangerous classes of the city, a large majority of whom had hitherto gone uneducated.' In the same month appeals were made in the press for subscriptions to build new church schools at St. Barnabas and St. Silas and the following month the Roman Catholics held a public meeting to raise funds to enlarge and build new schools in the diocese.

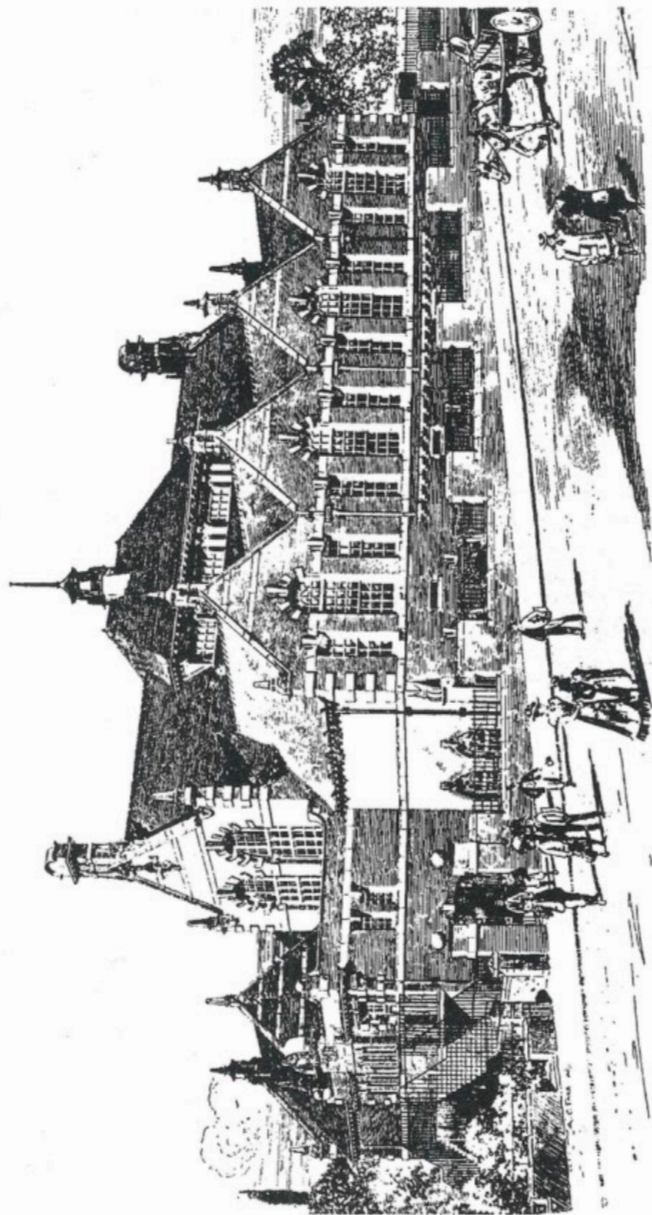
In a leading article headed 'School Rates or Subscriptions' the *Bristol Times and Mirror* declared itself to be the spokesman for Bristol's Conservatives and churchmen, stating 'We can tell the Lords of the Privy Council that we have no need of their Act as most of the parishes in the diocese have a school and a master', although acknowledging that little more than half the masters had a Government certificate and that 2,000 more places were required in Bristol.¹⁰

In another leading article a week later the paper claimed 'If we could get a short compulsory Act to enable us to deal with the neglected children of the streets we could dispense with the School Boards and the school tax ... It is simply absurd for working men to go out of their way to seek places on the Boards. It has been admitted now on all sides that if there has been any neglect it has been on the part of the working classes, but for which this Act would not be required. To contend that all classes should be represented on the board is like calling in a patient to consult and advise about his own malady. The working classes cannot spare the time to serve on the boards even if they possess the requisite qualifications. Unfortunately, there are already too many inducements held out to artisans to dabble in public affairs to the neglect of their own personal concern. Their hands are already full'.

Bristol, controlled by the Conservative Party, was the last big town to apply for a school board to be established and attracted criticism from the liberal *Western Daily Press* for its 'customary avoidance of hurry when improvements are recommended and for looking serenely around but making no sign'.¹¹ The *Bristol Mercury*, also liberal, was even more critical, declaring 'The Bristol Council does not represent the opinions of the bulk of the community but only those of a narrow selfish faction, intensely distrustful of the working-class and bitterly opposed to spreading the enlightenment which would crumble its power into dust'.¹²

When a special meeting of the Council was convened to consider a proposal to form a school board the *Times & Mirror* urged delay, suggesting that if the endowed schools were deprived of their income as a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, sufficient funds would be available from the charities to provide elementary education for all Bristol's children. Despite some initial opposition, the vote by the Council was eventually unanimous after supporters of church schools acknowledged that there was no other way the 'Arabs and waifs and strays from the courts' could be educated. The Vicar of St. Mary Redcliffe was quoted as saying that church schools could lose some of their existing pupils if children from the courts were brought in.¹³

The *Times & Mirror* expressed the concern that was to last for a decade about the possible decline of religious influence in schools when it declared 'That the strong and main feeling will be in favour of religious education we have no doubt, and we should be very sorry if it were not so ...' It also expressed the hope that the friends of religious education would have a commanding majority on the new board.¹⁴ The *Clifton Chronicle* was more forthright in asserting 'It is necessary to obtain a majority in favour of teaching the Bible or it will be excluded from our schools'.¹⁵



COUNCIL SCHOOLS, UPPER KNOWLE; ABOUT 1903

Opened 1887 with three departments - boys, girls and infants. Subsequent extensions increased total accommodation to 1335 by 1900. Taken over by Bristol following the Boundaries Act (1897).

For towns with a population over 100,000 the School Boards were to consist of 15 members elected in a secret ballot by all ratepayers. Nationally, the elections were conducted so successfully that in 1872 the Ballot Act was passed which introduced secret ballots for all future parliamentary and municipal elections. Women who qualified under the 1869 Poor Rate Assessment and Collection Act were entitled to vote and also to stand as candidates and from 1871-1902 nine of the 85 members were women, although two who had been nominated in the first elections withdrew. A leading article in the *Times & Mirror* expressed what appears to be a personal view that the business of the board would be done more expeditiously and decidedly by leaving the ladies to look after the schools off the board rather than on it, adding 'Although we have no strong or decided opinion, for myself, I feel it would be embarrassing were I on it.'¹⁶

Initially it seemed that an election might not be necessary as the two parties appeared to have reached agreement on a joint list but the working-class supporters of both parties insisted on having their own nominees and 26 candidates eventually contested the election. The Liberals nominated five candidates and the Conservatives seven but, with the exception of a secularist who polled the lowest vote, all candidates declared religious rather than political affiliations and the provision that voters could cast all their votes for one candidate was an advantage to minority groups. With notable exceptions - in particular the Rev. John Percival, first headmaster of Clifton College - the religious divide in Bristol was also a political divide; although both factions supported religious education the Conservatives/Anglicans defended denominational teaching which the Liberals/Dissenters (Nonconformists) opposed.

In support of their candidates the Liberals printed circulars which they distributed to pews in chapels and it was reported that the Wesleyans were doing a house-to-house canvass¹⁷ but despite election addresses being published in the newspapers only 12,945 electors voted¹⁸ - about 60%. The Liberals gained a one-seat majority which they held for most of the Board's life and Lewis Fry and Mark Whitwill were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively at the inaugural meeting.

By the end of the 1880s an independent Socialist and a Labour League candidate had been elected to the Board. Although generally supporting the Liberal leadership, both advocated policies intended to benefit the working-classes. John Fox, who had left school at the age of ten, stood on a programme of free, compulsory and secular education and planned to 'protest against the domination of the so-called upper classes'.¹⁹ In 1891 he attempted, unsuccessfully, to change the meeting times from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. to enable working men to attend. In the

same year the Socialist member, H.H. Gore, a Clifton solicitor, proposed unsuccessfully that members of the public should be allowed to sit in a visitors' gallery. Two years earlier he had also failed with a proposal that, where necessary, school meals should be provided, contending that 'food for the mind without food for the body is a farce'.²⁰ In 1892 Gore became Chairman of the Industrial Schools Committee which had responsibility for 657 children and in 1899 established the principle that all children should have one sufficient meal a day.

At the outset the School Board was described by the *Bristol Times & Mirror* as a 'White Elephant which will needlessly add to the tax burden of ratepayers'.²¹ Three years later it endorsed its view that the Board was unnecessary but acknowledged the tribute given by a Government inspector that 'in no large town has the Education Act been carried out with more ability, fairness and success than in Bristol.'²² He also commended the Board for 'getting hold of considerable numbers of neglected children, the very work which a Board ought to be doing'.²³

The Board's first function was to organise a door-to-door census which showed accommodation for 23,337 children and 27,554 children requiring elementary education (including 7,712 between 3 and 5) but 5,318 children between 5 and 13 were not registered at any school. This figure was soon shown to be understated when it was realised that another 4,074 of those who had claimed to be registered were either not known at the school or were attending very infrequently. The total figure for children not registered was amended to 9,392 - about one third of the total number of children requiring education. The door-to-door census in Bristol was taken by 44 enumerators supervised by four officers who subsequently became the School Attendance Officers - known as School Board men - for the four districts into which Bristol had been divided for educational purposes. After a year the number of officers was doubled and they were soon kept busy following decisions taken by the Board at its fifth meeting in 1871 when it framed bye-laws which waived school fees for poor families if recommended by the officers and enforced compulsory education for children from 5-13 (one of the first boards in the country to do so) although some exemptions were allowed from 10-13.

Boards were only allowed to build new schools where existing accommodation was inadequate, although they could take over voluntary schools when churches could not afford to bring them up to the required standard. At the outset the Board was satisfied that, with a number of schools being built by the churches, it would be able to accommodate the full complement of children and would not be faced with the need for a major building programme as in many other towns such as Leeds where schools had to be built to accommodate 52% of the children or Bradford

where education was a major cause of the large increase in rates expenditure.²⁴ Accommodation, however, was unevenly distributed and additional places were required in the large working-class districts of Bedminster and St. Phillip's. By the end of the first three-year term of office (1873) five voluntary schools with 1,225 pupils had been taken over because the churches could not afford necessary repairs but the School Board's first school - at Freestone Road in St. Phillip's - did not open until 1874. By 1882 six schools had been built but there was still a shortage of places; three more were required in St. Phillip's to replace church schools which had to be demolished and there was still a shortage of places in Bedminster.²⁵ By 1891 sixteen voluntary schools had been transferred and the School Board had built twelve schools and enlarged four more. A new Board school at Mina Road was regarded by the Government inspector as 'pleasant to look at and in every way convenient'²⁶ and at the end of the century a Bristol architect devised partitions so that the large halls could be divided into more suitably sized classrooms when not required for general assembly.

In December 1871 the Board published draft regulations for its elementary schools. The main features were:

- 1) Mixed classes with women teachers for children up to age of 7
- 2) Segregated classes for children over 7
- 3) The Bible to be read to pupils but no denominational teaching. (In 1873 Managers were to be required to report the times at which the Bible was read and the arrangements made for prayers and hymn singing)
- 4) A broad curriculum
- 5) Headmasters were to be responsible for corporal punishment which could not be administered by pupil teachers
- 6) Leaving age 13 but some exemptions allowed from 10-13
- 7) Fees 3d. per week up to third standard and 4d. above. Remission of fees for those unable to pay. (The Act allowed a maximum fee in a grant-aided school of 9d. per week but most schools throughout the country charged less than 4d.).

Curriculum

The curriculum was generally non-controversial during the life of the School Board which was, nevertheless, under pressure periodically from the very strong local temperance groups to include temperance teaching in the classroom. In an examination at Hotwells school in 1874 pupils in Standard V were required to write an essay on the value of rivers as an aid to industry and commerce.²⁷ In the CCE Report on Bristol for



PUPIL TEACHERS' CENTRE, BROAD WEIR

Original centre opened in Castle Street in 1889 and transferred to the YMCA Hall where day classes started in 1896. Broadweir centre opened in 1899 and closed in 1910 when no longer needed under new regulations issued by the Board of Education.

1883/84 the inspector welcomed the establishment of uniformity in arithmetic examinations,²⁸ and the following example shows the level pupils in Standard V, the highest class, were expected to achieve:

Bring 54054 seconds to a decimal of a day, multiply as a decimal by 0.8 and divide the product by .0075.

The curriculum reflected the prevailing social ethos. History and geography lessons were orientated to the Empire and to the great responsibility involved in dealing with the 'difficult problems of conquered races',²⁹ coupled with the need to develop feelings of patriotism. Special prizes were awarded for essays on the significance of Empire Day. Boys were encouraged to develop manly attitudes and girls were impressed with the importance of good training as housewives and of the mother's role in raising an imperial race. Stress was placed on the need to encourage middle-class standards of morality, orderliness and discipline; regular attendance, good attitudes and orderly work were often deemed to be more important than results when prizes were awarded.³⁰

Attendance

The Forster Act of 1870 failed to make school attendance compulsory but allowed boards to do so. Nationally, compulsion was not enforced until the Mundella Act was passed in 1880. Truancy had always been a problem when school attendance was voluntary before 1871 and was exacerbated by special attractions such as fairs, the Bristol races or market days. At Hotwells Boys' School truancy was frequent amongst the younger boys and a comment in the log book³¹ suggested that a little caning would be salutary. Four years later the attraction of the races was still a cause of truancy.³²

The Board's census in 1871 shewed that 27,554 children were eligible for education and in March Quarter 1871 the average attendance was only 13,385 - 48.5% of the total eligible. By October 1873 the average attendance in schools recognised as efficient by the Department of Education was 16,970 - 63% of the census figure and the highest of the seven largest towns in the country³³ but the Board was still concerned about truancy and decided on a four point plan:

- 1) To introduce a bye-law requiring employers to discontinue the employment of children of school age (One category of exemptions allowed)
- 2) To require the District Officers to make monthly visits to schools to identify absentees and take follow-up action
- 3) To ask the Watch Committee to provide names of neglected children found on the streets

4) To request the Home Office for powers to bring before the magistrates children not under proper control and for the magistrates to have the power to send such children to an Industrial School with reasonable maintenance costs paid by the parents.

Many poor parents still withheld their children from recognised schools which they regarded as both irrelevant to their lives and as an interference which deprived them of an income without which they would be in deeper poverty. In consequence, following the appointment of Attendance Officers, the number of private venture schools increased as some parents tried to avoid the need for their children to have full-time schooling. In its annual report for 1871/72 the CCE criticised the schools in Bristol as 'being invariably so badly constituted as to be quite inadmissible. Of the many visited only two or three had any pretensions to being regarded as efficient and schools of this class offered no guarantee or permanency. Although the teachers were not necessarily incompetent or ignorant the premises were quite unsuitable and were often in common rooms with no desks.'³⁴

In 1875, although attendance had increased in recognised schools by 38% over a period of four years, the School Board was concerned about the continued existence of the private venture schools and the 'neglect of the sharp-witted gutter children'³⁵ and joined a deputation representing 200 boards to the government. In Bristol, mainly in the two large working-class districts of Bedminster and St. Phillip's, there were 160 schools with 4,280 children; 98 were overcrowded with 3,176 children in rooms only large enough to accommodate 1,782 by the standards approved.³⁶

Despite its own report the government refused to ban the schools but passed the Sandon Act in 1876 which made employment illegal for children under 10 and also for children over 10 unless they could produce a certificate of proficiency which could only be obtained from a 'certified effective' school - defined as a public elementary school or any other school not conducted for private profit. Nevertheless many parents preferred the more casual regime offered by the Dames' schools and there were still about 3,000 children in Bristol attending them in 1879.³⁷ In 1875 the Vicar of St. Jude's complained that the action of the Board 'far from assisting us to rise, keeps us down by pouring in on us children whose parents do not care for instruction and who just attend so many times as to evade action by the law.'³⁸ Four years later the Board itself regarded the effect of compulsion as 'adding indigent and neglected children whose attendance is irregular'.³⁹

In 1880 the Mundella Act left the minimum leaving age at 10 but required children to stay at school until 13 if they failed to reach the

local standard of proficiency required for the award of a certificate. The Bristol School Board became one of the first to enforce the policy. In Bristol both the number of pupils on the register and the number attending schools continued to increase, helped by the raising of the minimum leaving age to 11 in 1893, to 12 in 1899 and, following the Education Act in 1900 which gave boards discretionary powers to raise the age, to 14 in 1900. The decision in 1900 was publicly supported by the Bristol & District Teachers' Association and by the Bristol Trades Council⁴⁰ but was opposed by local businessmen, employers and some workers. It was also opposed by Dr. Cook, Vice-Chairman of the Board, but was carried by 12-2⁴¹ and an attempt to rescind it two months later was defeated 9-5. Some exemptions were allowed for pupils over 12 reaching prescribed educational levels. In 1897 there had been 3,034 children from 12 to 14 in Bristol's elementary schools and by 1902 there were already 5,388. Nationally, the normal leaving age was only raised to 14 under the Fisher Act of 1918.

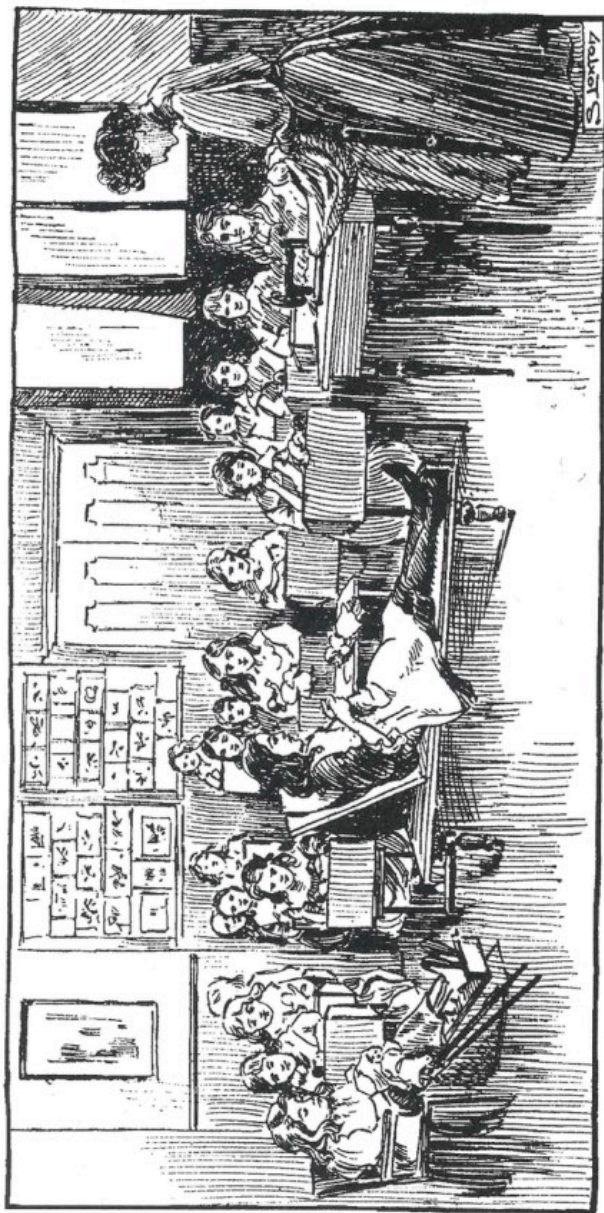
The Bedminster, St. George, Horfield and Stapleton boards merged with Bristol following boundary extensions in 1897 and doubled the number of children attending Board schools but only added about 3,000 to the voluntary schools.

Table 1 - School Attendance 1841-1901

Year	Population	Registered Pupils in Elementary Schools			Attendance		Note
		Board	Voluntary	Total	No.	%	
1841	122,296	-	14,694	14,694	N/K	N/K	1
1851	137,328	-	18,226	18,226	N/K	N/K	2
1873	182,522	(1,225)	22,429	23,654	16,882	71.3	3
1881	205,795	7,237	22,690	29,927	22,170	74.1	
1891	222,049	12,148	24,079	36,227	28,207	77.8	4
1900	329,086	35,096	24,319	59,415	49,659	83.5	5

Notes

- 1 Bristol Statistical Society survey of children in voluntary schools. There were also 7,171 children who attended Sunday School but not day school.
- 2 Education Census 1851
- 3 Average attendance for 1871-1873 was 16,528 (7th Triennial Report). The first school built by the Board was not opened until 1874 but six voluntary schools had already been taken over with 1,225 pupils.
- 4 Average for 1889-91 (7th Triennial Report). Pupils at Board schools 24.2% (as compared with 51.5% at Nottingham and 53.4% at Sheffield (Royal Commission - Elementary Education Acts - 1888).
- 5 Average for 1900 (10th Triennial Report). Attendance at Board schools was marginally higher than at voluntary schools. A school census in July 1900 shewed 57,400 children



REDCROSS STREET SPECIAL SCHOOL: DOLL-DRESSING CLASS, 1907

Opened 1896 as a junior and infants' school. Accommodation in 1900 for 680 pupils. In the same year 36 physically handicapped children were admitted. In 1903 the Infants' School was transferred to make room for 103 children classified as mentally deficient to be transferred from four special centres and in 1904 the Government gave approval for 100 mentally and 100 physically handicapped children to be accommodated on the site.

aged 5-14; the balance under 5. The increase is due to a major boundary extension in 1897. A small extension in 1904 added about 2000 pupils.

- 6 Statistics, generally, are sometimes altered from one year to another in official reports and some sources may shew figures marginally different.

Non-attendance, whether caused by children's truancy or by parents, was a long-standing problem nationally and locally. From October 1871 to October 1873 the Attendance Officers in Bristol made 51,534 home visits and issued 850 summons for non-attendance; 58 children were sent to an Industrial School. At Hotwells School women were employed in 1873 to visit absentees. Even after the Mundella Act of 1880, which made attendance compulsory for children from 5 to 10, enforcement was still difficult and in 1881 the Board approved new measures to combat truancy. Teachers were required to make weekly attendance returns and to liaise with parents. Two additional Attendance Officers were appointed and from 1883-1885 nearly 400,000 home visits were made and 3,459 summons issued. For boys who developed 'Bohemian tendencies', the Board set up a Truancy School in Southwell Street, Kingsdown. After 12 weeks the boys were licensed out to schools selected by their parents but those who re-offended were returned to the Truancy School. Many of the first 50 boys were transferred from the Day Industrial School where they had previously been sent by magistrates. The Truancy School was commended by a Government inspector for producing excellent results which led to boys who had been discharged being among the most regular attenders when released.⁴² In 1894 charges of cruelty were made against the school but, despite promising to ask for a Government enquiry, the School Board rebutted the accusations.⁴³

Discipline

In the early years some of the children were reluctant to attend school; many were unruly and caused disciplinary problems which were sometimes accentuated by inadequate staffing and accommodation. In 1873 the government inspector criticised poor obedience and the lack of quietness at Hotwells school but referred to the difficulty of one teacher looking after the boys with no assistance. The following year he commented that the children 'could neither stand still nor sit still and began to talk the moment they were unoccupied' but he again referred to the size of classes and the inadequate buildings and in 1879 the grant was withheld. The master's style was criticised as noisy but the drill sergeant was commended, although the boys were described as being inattentive and talkative.⁴⁴ At some schools drill inspections were carried

out monthly and in the Truancy School drill occupied two hours a day. A new code in 1875 required that drill should be of a military nature and also provided an additional grant of 1/- per head to schools which encouraged cleanliness and punctuality.⁴⁵ Despite a general improvement in discipline there was a 'growing feeling that it had been at the expense of some efficiency. Head teachers were teaching less and in some cases the work was done by pupil-teachers or young untrained assistants'.⁴⁶

Corporal punishment was controversial and in 1889, following a long debate by the board, a proposal that girls ought not to be caned except for a 'gross breach of the moral code' was defeated by 6 to 5. Following representations by the headmasters it was decided that:

- 1) Caning should be by the Headmaster on the back of the hand in front of the class
- 2) Boxing of the ears and cuffing by hand was not permitted
- 3) Infants should not be caned and girls only in extreme cases.

In 1900 the Board issued revised regulations. Punishment registers had to be kept and the rules about caning strictly observed. In 1904 Heads were given powers to delegate caning to assistants who had five years teaching experience.

Despite the regulations children were frequently beaten by teachers, sometimes violently and for petty reasons such as being late. Most manuals of teaching methods recommended that instructions and tasks should be obeyed with 'military precision, promptness and regularity' but some Bristol teachers refused to implement instructions for caning children and were supported by national campaigns against corporal punishment initiated by the Radical Working Men's Association and by the Society for the Reform of School Discipline, influenced mainly by the Independent Labour Party. Barton Hill School, in particular, was noted for imposing military standards of discipline and on occasions parents took the law into their own hands in protest against what were regarded as brutal assaults on their children. The lack of boots and even socks was a frequent cause of truancy. S. Humphries, in his book *Hooligans or Rebels*, gives examples of resistance to harsh discipline shown by children and parents in Bristol schools around the turn of the century. In one school, where the teacher had inflicted pain on a small boy, Humphries' informant recalled urging the other children to 'have a go at her' with the result that the teacher's wig was pulled off, her head was rubbed in snow and she was deposited in a dustbin. In another case a child's aunt pulled the teacher into the playground by her hair, with all the children cheering and crying out 'Go on, have 'er'.⁴⁷ In the same period children at St. Luke's School (Bedminster) rebelled against what they regarded as an unjustified caning by a pupil teacher and attacked

him with a barrage of stones and river mud when he left school at the end of the day, causing him to end his association with the school.

Finance

The Government had anticipated that School Board expenditure would not exceed a 3d. rate and would be financed equally from the rates, Government grant and fees but by 1883 fees in Bristol were only 2d. per week and provided 11% of the cost.⁴⁸ The Bedminster School Board set fees of 4d. per week for the new school at Knowle Park in 1878. By 1891/92 annual fees in Board schools in Bristol averaged 6s. 6d. (32½p) p.a. and 11s. 11d. (59½p) in church schools.⁴⁹

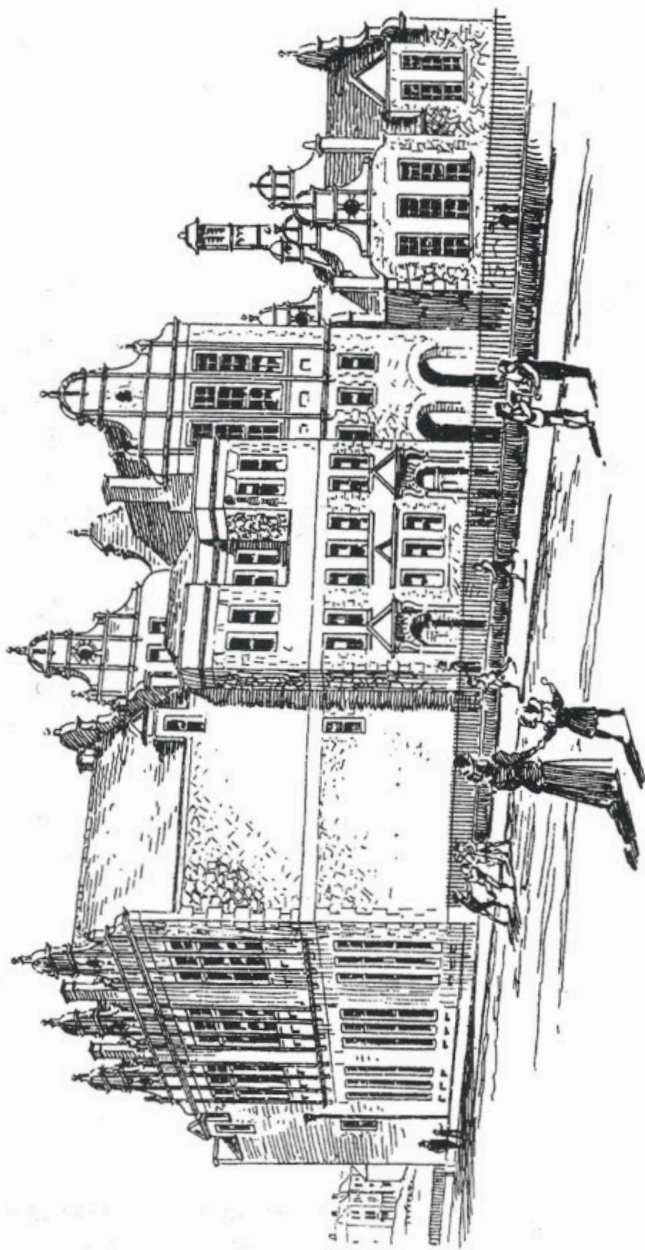
By 1880 the charge to the rates had replaced the religious argument as the main division between opposing factions despite Bristol being the most economical of all the large towns with an annual cost of £1 15s. 9d. (£1.79) per head⁵⁰ and in the 1883 elections comparisons were made between the cost of education locally where there were still few Board schools and in other large towns where there were far more. Table 2 shows the increase in the rate charge from 1871-1897 and Table 3 a comparison with two other large towns made by the *Bristol Times & Mirror*⁵¹ in 1883. In this year only 15% of children were attending Board schools in Bristol as compared with 45% in Bradford and about 49% in Birmingham.⁵² By this time interest in education had either waned or become non-controversial; in 1883 there were only 16 candidates for 15 seats and three years later there was no contest.

Table 2 - Board School Income 1871-1897

Source	1871-73 ¹ £	1891 £	1892 £	1897 ² £
Fees	371	3,758	313	-
Government Grants	543	10,232	15,970	25,350
Rates	8,260	26,500	32,500	41,500
TOTAL	9,174	40,490	48,955	66,850
Rates in £ (d.)	1	6¼	7¼	9¼

Notes

- 1 1871-73 figures are for a 32 month period. The rate contribution included £3,710 for Industrial schools and fees for pauper children. The net additional contribution to the rates for implementing the 1870 Act was £4,250. Other figures are for the financial year ending in March.
- 2 The rates increased to 15d. following the boundary extension in 1898 as most of the schools in the added areas were board schools.
- 3 Special Government grants for Industrial schools not included. 1891-£1120; 1892-£877.



FAIRFIELD ROAD SECONDARY SCHOOL, MONTEPELIER

Opened 1898 with three departments - senior, junior and infants. Accommodation in 1900 - 1054.

Officially recognised as a secondary school in 1905

Table 3 - Comparison of Education Rates 1883

Town	Rate (d.)	No. of Pupils	
		School Board	Denominational
Bristol	1½	4,929	28,306
Bradford	6	19,994	24,159
Birmingham	7½	28,775	29,697

In 1888 the Royal Commission on the Elementary Education Acts suggested that the system of payment by results had been carried too far and was too rigidly applied. The system was abandoned in 1890 and replaced by a standard grant. The following year Bristol took advantage of the Free School Elementary Education Act which offered an additional grant to schools which abolished fees, so that by 1891/2 the total grant was increased by about 50%.⁵³

Disabled Children

Some children were educated outside the mainstream of elementary education, including a number suffering from disabilities. The Bristol Asylum for the Blind (School of Industry) had been started by two Quakers in 1793 and a hundred years later the School Board paid for five children as residents and for six as day pupils. In 1885 the Board provided a class at Castle School for the special instruction of deaf children and in 1894 also paid for ten children to attend the Institute for the Deaf. Prior to 1894, parents were not compelled to provide education for children who were blind or deaf, but in that year the Elementary Schools (Blind and Deaf Children) Act was passed which made it a duty for parents to ensure that their children received suitable education. When an Act in 1899 made Education authorities responsible for providing education for blind and deaf children up to the age of 16 the Board of Guardians, which had paid for poor blind and deaf children to be educated, passed the responsibility to the School Board. In Bristol the Board had already opened a residential Institution for Deaf Children at Marlborough House in Kingsdown Parade.

In 1900 a school for 36 physically handicapped children was opened at Redcross Street and three years later 103 children classed as mentally deficient were transferred to other premises on the site from four special centres where the accommodation was inadequate. Although a general school medical service was only introduced in 1908 following national legislation, some eyesight tests were carried out under the School Board and at Hotwells School in 1903 54% of the children were diagnosed as having problems.⁵⁴

Higher Education

In 1875 the Bristol School Board reported that 210 Bristol children qualified for scholarships offering free education worth £30 p.a. for five years at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Colston School and the Red Maids' School and that 'such advantages were certainly not available to the working classes of any other English city'. The 1870 Act defined an elementary school as one in which elementary education was the principal part of the education given. Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham used this definition to establish higher grade schools⁵⁵ but, although the Bristol School Board had wished to encourage children to pursue their education beyond the elementary stage, it decided at an early stage that it lacked the necessary powers. The St. George Board, then outside Bristol, opened a School for Organised Science with 500 pupils in 1894. In London the board had regarded it as a duty to 'make a ladder from the gutter to university along which any child could climb'⁵⁶ but in 1899 a Local Government Board auditor surcharged all expenditure by the board on pupils over 15 and the following year the Cockerton judgment was upheld by the courts. The decision caused concern in Bristol which, by then, had obtained planning and loan permission to provide science education at Fairfield Higher Grade School only to have permission withdrawn following the judgment. Fairfield and Merrywood schools were eventually upgraded and by 1905 all three schools were approved as fee-paying secondary schools with some places free; by this time responsibility for education had been transferred to counties and county boroughs.

The Technical Instruction Act of 1889 had given boroughs powers to levy a 1d. rate to supply or give aid in providing technical or manual instruction. Following the Local Taxation (Customs & Excise) Act of 1890 they received a grant for this purpose, known as whisky money because it had been intended originally as compensation to publicans displaced by Government legislation. In Bristol the Council received £10,400 for the first two years but refused a request from the School Board to use most of it to build three technical schools and provide 120 annual grants of £5 to ex-Standard VI pupils. Instead, the Council used it to provide three-year scholarships for existing grammar and technical schools and some one-year scholarships for evening classes. The Council also gave grants to the University College, Bristol Grammar School, the Bristol School of Science and Art and Redland High School and established a School of Cookery and Domestic Science at 2 Great George Street. The School Board was only given £40⁵⁷ and objected that the Council's scheme did little for children in elementary schools. In 1899 it received a further £105 but was still objecting that it was not represented on the Technical Instruction Committee.⁵⁸

Education Committee

The court ruling on the Cockerton decision created an anomaly in that Boards were not allowed to provide higher grade education but boroughs could use government grants to fund scientific education. In the 1890s the Bryce Royal Commission had reported that secondary education was inadequate and needed state intervention. It recommended that new authorities should be established to provide secondary education and in 1902 Parliament passed the Balfour Act which transferred responsibility for elementary education from the School Boards to newly-established Local Education Authorities (LEAs). The Act led to a more uniform administration by bringing Board schools, voluntary schools and technical education into a closer association and also led to the transformation of a few higher grade schools to secondary schools. Church schools were given grants and also relieved of rate payments but were required to accept local authority policy on staffing and secular instruction. The proposals were strongly resisted by the Bristol School Board which put forward counter-proposals to keep control of elementary education with the elected boards in towns with over 50,000 pupils. The Board also suggested that, if Councils were to be made responsible, a third of the members of the new Education Committees should be people with educational experience and should include women who were then not allowed to be elected as councillors in boroughs. 80 protest meetings were held in Bristol when the bill was under discussion and Bristol's Nonconformist churches opposed the change which they feared would create an ecclesiastical monopoly. 250 supporters, led by Pastor Hiley of Broadmead Chapel, issued a Manifesto of Passive Resistance and refused to pay their rates.⁵⁹ The group, although not fully representative even of Bristol's Nonconformists, included 27 clergymen and the campaign lasted for six years during which £800 court costs were incurred and some objectors had their goods distrained.⁶⁰

For Bristol, an important feature of the Act was the transfer of power from the School Board with a Liberal majority and chairman to a committee (LEA) chaired by a member of the ruling Conservative group, Councillor Ernest Cook, Doctor of Science, who had been elected to the School Board in 1895 and who was to remain Chairman of the LEA for 29 years. In 1903 the new Education Committee voted by 10-9 to allow 20 of the voluntary schools to continue to charge fees but the following year it was instructed by the Council to discontinue fees as from 31 March 1905. By this time only a half of the voluntary schools in Bristol were charging fees, mostly 1d. or 2d. per week, and many were in financial difficulty despite having had an increased annual grant of 5/-

for each child under the Voluntary Schools Act (1897), In 1899 the Bishop of Bristol had acknowledged that the Board schools were well managed and that many people considered that the Board had 'such a careful system of religious education' that there was little point in putting money into separate schools. Nevertheless, he criticised the education in board schools as being totally inadequate for church people and complained of scandalous discrimination in the schools against the established church.⁶¹

When the change was made the LEA in Bristol took over 47 Board schools with accommodation for 38,187 pupils and 55 voluntary schools, which became entitled to support from the rates, with 24,388 pupils,⁶² although only 400 children were receiving higher education⁶³ and spending per child was marginally lower in Bristol than the average for England and Wales.⁶⁴

Assessment of Board's Achievements

Although facing problems in some less populous areas the school boards, generally, could claim that they had fulfilled the task they had been given. Progress had been slow but substantial, discipline had improved, attendance had risen to over 80% and literacy had increased from about 77% to 97%. To some onlookers Bristol appeared to be apathetic about education. In 1889 only 40% of the electorate voted but by then there was some evidence of satisfaction with the results achieved and some of the early fears of the churches had been allayed. In 1884 the Report of the Bishop's Committee on the Poor considered that the public elementary educational work of Bristol was in a 'distinctly satisfactory condition' and the work of the visiting agents had been beneficial to the children's interests. Although the 'gutter' children and 'Arabs' were not reached, the artisans' intellectual capacity had improved so remarkably that they showed a more responsible interest in political and social questions.⁶⁵ In the same year this view was generally endorsed by an inquiry by the *Bristol Mercury* which concluded 'The School Board is the great social lever of the present day and the hope of the rising generation. There is no slum so filthy and loathsome, no home so squalid and miserable, that the Board's officers do not find their way there, throwing light, often for the first time, upon the utterly miserable and neglected condition of the families of children.'⁶⁶ In that year the Government inspector for Bristol's schools presented his last report before his retirement in which he concluded 'With all the remaining imperfections, how hopeful now is the prospect compared with 1850'.⁶⁷

Notes

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

BM - *Bristol Mercury*

T&M - *Bristol Times & Mirror*

WDP - *Western Daily Press*

BSB - Bristol School Board

CCE/AR - Appendix to the Annual Report of the Committee of the Council on Education

PP - Parliamentary Papers - Fiche No.

References with prefix A/No. are to accession numbers in the Bristol Reference Library; prefix (A) is for numbers of unpublished theses in the Bristol University Library; prefix BRO is accession number in the Bristol Record Office. Parliamentary Papers references are to micro-fiche records (held in Bristol University Library).

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27. *Hotwells School Log Books* - BRO/37869 (2) (a)
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30. Ind, *Ibid*, p.13

31. *Hotwells School Log Books*, 8/8/70 - BRO/37869 (2) (a)
32. *Ibid*, 20/3/74
33. CCE 1873/74, Part II, p.127
34. CCE 1871/72, p.47
35. CCE 1875/76, Part I, pp.356/7
36. P. Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools in Victorian England*, p.200
37. In 1908 the Annual Report of the Education Committee reported that many poor families in St. Phillip's regarded education as a tiresome necessity and were very eager for their children to leave school and earn money.
38. CCE 1875/76, Part II, p.367
39. CCE 1879/80, Part II, p.332
40. BSB - 29/10/00
41. BSB - Extraordinary General Meeting 1/3/01
42. CCE 1883/84, p.347
43. In 1904 The Truancy School was criticised by a visiting inspector for being too punitive. By 1906-7 only 32 boys were admitted as compared with an average of 105 since 1883. When it was closed in 1907 the boys still attending transferred to Cardiff where new offenders were also sent.
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47. S. Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels*, pp.79-87, Oxford, Basil Blackwell
48. *Bishop's Committee on the Bristol Poor* (1884), p.66
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57. Report of the Technical Instruction Committee to the City Council 13/7/93
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60. WDP, 13/9/04, reported that 90 summons had been issued, including four for clergymen
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62. Bristol Education Committee - First Annual Report (1903/4), p.20
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List of Board Schools at 31 December 1900

<i>Name of School</i>	<i>Departments</i>
Anglesea Place	B-G-I
Ashley Down	B-G-I
Ashton Gate	B-G-M-I
Avon Vale	B-G-I
Barleyfields	M-I
Barton Hill	B-G-M-I
Bedminster Bridge	M-I
Bedminster Down	M-I
Bishop Road	B-G-I
Blackfriars	G
Castle	S-J-I
Chester Park	G-I
Clement Street	I
Crews Hole	M-I
Easton	B-G-I
Easton Road	M-I
Eastville	B-G-I
Fairfield Road Higher Grade	S-J-I
Greenbank	B-G-I
Hotwells	B-G-I
Knowle	B-G-I
Luckwell	S-J-I
Maudlin Street	I
Maze Street	B-G
Merrywood Higher Grade	S-J-I
Mina Road	B-G-I
Moorfields	B-G-I
Newfoundland Road	B-G-M-I
Redcross Street	J-I
Redfield	M-I
Russell Town	B-G-I
St. Anne's	M-I
St. George Higher Grade	M
St. Philip's	B-G-I
South Street	S-J-I
Summerhill	B-G-I
Sussex Street	M-I
Two Mile Hill	B-G-I
Victoria Park	S-J-I
Westbury Park	I
Whitehall	B-G-I
Windmill Hill	B-G-M-I

Key:

B - Boys	J - Juniors
G - Girls	M - Mixed
I - Infants	S - Senior

Acknowledgment

The assistance of all the staff at the Bristol Record Office and at the Education Department Library of the Bristol University is gratefully acknowledged.

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ISBN 0 901388 77 7

ISSN 1362 7759